

Comment on HR 14 being considered by the Montana State Legislature

January 26, 2009

My name is Russ Abolt. I reside in the Swan Valley where I maintain my retirement home with my wife Larrine. We have owned our land in the Swan since the winter of 1997.

We support the passage of HR 14 wherein funds would be provided for the state acquisition of Plum Creek land to be included in the state educational trust fund. This is an appropriate investment of Montana tax payer funds in order to support the on going education of our young people for the foreseeable future.

The state is presented with an unprecedented opportunity to acquire at an incredibly modest price, highly productive forest land that will provide a sustainable yield of timber and revenue for the educational trust fund for the foreseeable future. If we loose this once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire this land, we will not have a second chance. The land will be sold into private hands, subject to future development.

Further, these forest lands need to remain undeveloped in order to minimize the rural/urban interface fire burden that increases with every additional new home construction. It is already a huge and growing financial and management burden. The cost of fire protection will only increase with residential sprawl into our forest land.

As legislatures you have an exceptional opportunity to serve the citizens of Montana and particularly our young people. A yes vote on this legislation provides proof of your commitment to the long term well being of our public educational institutions in Montana.

I am a retired trade association manager who served a manufacturing industry for 35 years. I have come to know, observe and appreciate good business and management practices over these many years. The passage of HR 14 is good business.

Russ and Larrine Abolt

Larrine Abolt
Russ Abolt